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REVIEW OF

"An Inquiry into the Genuineness of the Manuscript Corrections in Mr. J. Payne Collier's Annotated Shakspeare, Folio, 1632; and of certain Shaksperian Documents likewise published by Mr. Collier."

By N. E. S. A. Hamilton. (Bentley.)

ALSO,

THE REPLY OF MR. J. PAYNE COLLIER,

TO THE

"INQUIRY."

(Reprinted from the (London) Athenæum of the 18th of February, 1860.)

"O dear discretion, how his words are suited!
The fool hath planted in his memory
An army of good words; and I do know
A many fools, that stand in better place,
Garnish'd like him, that for a tricky word
Defy the matter."

SHAKESPEARE.

PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION

BY

CHARLES W. FREDERICKSON.

NEW YORK.

1860.

A. J. Odell
Care of W. Frederickson

11-2-18

RECEIVED

1878

THIS REPRINT
IS
DEDICATED
TO THE ADMIRERS OF
MR. J. PAYNE COLLIER,
IN THE
UNITED STATES,
BY
C. W. FREDERICKSON,
WHO APPRECIATES HIS CHARACTER AS AN
HONEST MAN,
AN
ACCOMPLISHED SCHOLAR,
AND A
WORTHY ELUCIDATOR OF THE TEXT OF SHAKESPEARE



An Inquiry into the Genuineness of the Manuscript Corrections in Mr. J. Payne Collier's Annotated Shakspeare, Folio, 1632; and of certain Shaksperian Documents likewise published by Mr. Collier. By N. E. S. A. Hamilton. (Bentley.)

In another part of our impression the reader will find Mr. Collier's answer to the charges contained in this 'Inquiry'—charges against his literary honesty and personal honour which every man of sense and delicacy will grieve to find dated from a Department of the National Library. We have read the accusation. We have read the reply. In the fair and candid spirit which alone befits a literary investigation—the spirit which, in perfect courtesy and perfect fearlessness, seeks solely to arrive at truth—we shall now compare with the reader our impressions of this most singular and painful case.

"Department of Manuscripts, British Museum, January, 1860"—such is the date borne by this 'Inquiry.' We will not dwell on the lamentable fact of the great national library being made the scene of such a debate. Our opinion on that point remains the same. The British Museum was founded, as we think, for a nobler end than to serve as a literary Old Bailey; its staff of excellent officers should never be degraded to the functions of public prosecutors. But having now to deal with concrete facts, not with abstract notions of right or wrong, the reader will pass that by as of less immediate interest. Character is at stake—honour that is dearer to a man than life. When character is in question, no man need pause to discuss the point of taste. Enough to ascertain whence the accusation comes. Of this there is unhappily no doubt. Every act in the indictment against Mr. Collier bears the seal, so to say, of a Department of the British Museum. The writings date from the British Museum. The writers serve in the British Museum. Mr. Arnold, Mr. Maskelyne, Mr. Hamilton—all the young gentlemen who, in newspapers and magazines, have for eight months past been lifting up their voices against Mr. Collier—are employed in the British Museum.

The unanimity of these Museum gentlemen is not more clear than their companionship. But the mere fact of their unanimity, pleasant in itself will not impress the world outside the Museum

gates. A common sentiment—a common habit—a common conviction—often pervades a regiment or a corporation. The Tenth don't dance. The Blues have a pet pattern in plate. The Royals read. Trinity House has its own traditions about shoals and tides. Guildhall delights in turtle. Manchester loves free trade. On other points the members of these corporations will fight each other—on these they will fight the world. Uncle Toby would trace the unanimity at the mess to a taste or a twist in the colonel. Man is imitative. Twenty fellows gape because one gapes. In bodies open to the control of a leading mind, opinion is a habit; the value of the whole mass of opinion, counting by hands, is not more than that of the single head. Should the colonel swear yon cloud is very like a whale, his testimony to the truth of such a picture will not be strengthened by the additional and identical oaths of his twelve hundred rank and file.

In the case of this Manuscript Department corps, the colonel who gives the law to his subalterns is not hard to find. The corps, indeed, seize every occasion to point him out. In every note to newspaper and magazine, conspicuously again in the grateful Preface to this 'Inquiry,' appears the name and figure of Sir Frederic Madden. Sir Frederic is the Cæsar of this band. Mr. Arnold tells us that Sir Frederic is a palæographer of such vast renown that his mere word would suffice to authenticate or condemn the *Corrected Folio*. This may be valiant; but is there no text which warns us when discretion may be the better part of valour? Cæsar was fond of hearing his legions shout before his car; but the humorous rogues who bawled to please him sometimes bawled to please themselves; and then they let out truths which Cæsar, big as he was, would rather have kept in the privacy of his tent. Mr. Hamilton is even less discreet than his brother ensign. He plucks the veil from his hero. Sir Frederic, we learn from him, has been busy in this business—Sir Frederic set the 'Inquiry' afoot—Sir Frederic helped it with advice and with private papers—Sir Frederic made the first discoveries of the "fraud"—Sir Frederic sanctioned and encouraged the investigations which bring this scandal on the world of letters. In one place we are suffered to peruse his private notes. In another place we are told the story of this Shakspeare investigation. The "Annotated Shakspeare," says the Preface, "was placed in Sir F. Madden's hands by the Duke of Devonshire. His independent examination of it completely convinced him of the fictitious character of the writing of the marginal corrections; and this conclusion he freely communicated to inquirers interested in knowing it. The correspondence between certain pencil marks in the margins with corrections in

ink, first noticed by myself, led him to a closer examination of the volume, and to the detection of numerous marks of punctuation and entire words in pencil, and in a modern character, in connexion with the pretended older writing in ink; instances of which were subsequently found to occur on nearly every page. It was, moreover, owing in a great measure to Sir Frederic Maddens' encouragement that I was originally induced to bestow that attention to the subject, which has developed the inquiry to its present results."

Now we, too, should allow to Sir Frederic Madden a considerable share of learning and experience in his own department of palæography; yet with certain purchases for the Manuscript Department in our mind, we should most assuredly hesitate to place him high above all his fellows. Europe may have many a worthier son than he. We absolutely reject the idea that his mere word suffices to authenticate or condemn a document. Sir Frederic may suffer himself to be entreated of the minor deities of the Bloomsbury Olympus to assume the god; but he will hardly brave the laughter of mankind by affecting to give the nod. This is not a question to be settled even by a palæographic Jove. Sir Frederic's view is known; yet the dispute is not ended. Of the many gods in the British Museum, there is none so mighty and so awful as to calm the discord in the literary spheres.

The Reader, having found out *who* are the assailants of Mr. Collier, will now seek to learn *why* they are his assailants. The circumstances compel inquiry. A great literary attack—to all appearances conducted by one who declines the responsibility of failure while accepting beforehand any small gleam of credit which may grow out of success—and carried forward by the forces of a public institution, which from its neutral and gentle purpose, should be scrupulously guarded against the suspicion of being used for personal and party ends—provokes some scrutiny into the motive power. *Why* should these officers of the British Museum assail Mr. Collier? Every one will ask this question. Every one will get such answer to it as he can. We know that in starting such a query, a Reader may be nearing perilous ground. It is not his fault. If there be peril, it is not of his seeking. A very startling question comes before him. The names of four gentlemen of the British Museum are put in evidence against Mr. Collier; other "friends and colleagues" of that establishment are cited to the same effect in mass. Indeed, the whole body of scholars and gentlemen serving in the National Library are made—unconsciously, and without their own consent, we verily believe—to appear as witnesses. To appear for what? For the purpose, as it seems to us, of hinting

away the character of an aged scholar—of insinuating charges of fraud and forgery against a writer of blameless life—of inferentially suggesting accusations so vile and gross that a man of honour would scarcely whisper them to his own heart until the conclusive proofs were in his hand. When this is the array of things on one side, an impatient Reader will be driven to inquire if there be any conceivable reason why the officers of the British Museum should wage this cruel war on Mr. Collier? Are they free from the suspicion of private passion? Is there cause for this hostility other than the love of truth? Has there been previous provocation of their wrath? Do they owe Mr. Collier any ancient grudge.

A Reader making these inquiries will be grieved to find that the officers of the British Museum, however gentlemanly and scholarly, however much above suspicion of personal motives in their ordinary acts and writings, are very far from standing above suspicion of personal hostility in the particular case of Mr. Collier. The young gentleman who signs the Preface disclaims personal motives. We believe he does so in good faith. The motives of a man are often most abstruse, and the sources of love and hate are sometimes hidden even from those whose blood they warm and whose pens they guide. Grudge descends. In corporations as in families, the Vendetta has a long life. It is a matter of public notoriety that in the course of an active literary career, Mr. Collier has had more than one sharp brush with officers of the British Museum; that by his opposition and by his writings he has given very deep offence in that institution. There was the Royal Commission of Inquiry, of which Mr. Collier was Secretary. There was the question of Catalogue. There were the 'Letters to Lord Ellesmere.' It has been no secret in literary society for the past dozen years, that a most violent feeling of hostility to Mr. Collier existed in Great Russell Street. The Reader may not care to judge between the factions. Enough for him that there are factions. The disputes were chiefly personal. *Who* could make the best Catalogue? *Who* could get together the best books? *Who* could keep them in the best condition? The officers in possession held their ground against Mr. Collier, and against his powerful friends the late Duke of Devonshire and the late Lord Ellesmere. It is understood that these noblemen, and more especially Lord Ellesmere, wished to put Mr. Collier at the head of the Museum. To this arrangement every man in the institution was averse; for the rule of the Library is to rise by ranks; and the introduction of an outside man of letters would not only seem to officers ambitious of higher place and better pay a slight to their service, but a bar to their promotion. The principle of putting a distinguished man of letters over the heads

of officers trained to their work, may, on literary and moral grounds, be open to debate. The appointment of Prof. Owen is a case in point. But to the officers of the Library such a principle is simply detestable. Fill the high places of the Museum by men distinguished for their literary service, and the prospect of the junior officers are at once closed. In Mr. Collier's case the battle was sharp. Yet the officers of the institution held their own; and from the subsequent growth and improvement in the Library, we may safely conclude that they held their own because they were thoroughly practical and sufficient men. We have no quarrel with the principle for which they fight. We like to see men rise from the ranks. We like to reflect that every assistant in the Reading Room carries the staff of Principal in his knapsack. But a battle having taken place, the Reader will perceive that officers who are only mortal, may not be sorry to show that a gentleman who assailed their competency in years gone by, when the world was less with them than it is now, would have been no safe guardian of the national treasures.

Reading all that the Manuscript Department has to say in the light of these old facts, the Reader will have no difficulty in passing to some very safe perceptions. His first perception will be, that this book is very dear. He pays Mr. Bentley for a volume, which, on examination, proves to be nearly all extract from newspapers, journals, and printed books of the commonest kind. In all our wide experience of compilations we know of no case to compare with this. There are nine pages of Preface, eleven about the corrected Folio, fourteen about odds and ends. That is all the original writing. Each page contains twenty-four lines, each line about seven words. The whole might occupy two pages of the *Athenæum*. The price is six shillings?

His next perception will be, that the pledge to substantiate the charges made against the Corrected Folio has been shirked. No attempt is made to redeem the plighted word. The charges are repeated; they are not proved. Italics are not arguments. Twenty assertions do not make one fact. It is not in a court of law, or in a court of criticism, that two witnesses who do not know can be allowed to weigh for one who does. The glib way in which our Manuscript Department passes by the Corrected Folio, is perfectly astounding. Look at the course throughout. The Manuscript Department announces in the newspapers a great discovery. The Old Corrector has been found a base impostor. Mr. Collier is a forger, or the dupe of a forger. The evidence for these assertions is said to be overwhelming. A pledge is given that this evidence shall be produced at once. Meanwhile the Folio is in the Manu-

script Department, and will be freely shown. A week passes, no pamphlet. A month, no pamphlet. Six months, no pamphlet. The world waits. The pamphlet gets written and printed; fac-similes get drawn and distributed. It is in the press. But a hitch occurs. Mysterious whispers go about. There is a talk of lawyers consulted, of further investigation, of presumed facts melting away. Apologetic paragraphs creep into newspapers. The public are asked to believe that the facts are proved? A cry of sympathy and indignation swells from society against men who dare to make a frightful accusation against a living writer without being ready to produce what they at least may chose to consider their proofs of guilt. Another move is then made. Something must be done. It is not Mr Collier, it is the Manuscript Department which is now on trial. Again we hear that the book is coming. But, lo! another change. Mr. Bentley is now to be publisher. Mr. Bentley advertises, Mr. Bentley prints. The thing is ready for issue. This person has seen it, that person has read it. The world will have it to-morrow. This afternoon the editor of the *Athenæum* shall positively have a copy. Even at the eleventh hour come more delays. Lawyers are again said to be consulting. Weeks pass by; the work is always to appear on Monday. Saint Monday comes, not the book. At last there is a sort of clandestine publication: the volume is out, and nobody knows of it. No copy comes to the *Athenæum*. Why is Mr. Bentley's usual course as publisher avoided? We are not aware that Mr. Bentley, in his long and eminent career as a publisher, ever before omitted to send us a book of his on the day of issue. Why all this mystery? Fancy a pamphlet that is to convince the literary world of an immense fraud having been perpetrated, being withheld from the literary journals! Does all this change of purpose, this delay, this suppression, bespeak the reader's favourable attention as to a conscientious writer dealing with a just cause?

Now look at the contents for the proofs pledged to the world. We are called to a trial of the Old Corrector. This Old Corrector is a modern literary swindler. Mr. Collier, who believes in the Old Corrector, is a dupe or a knave. Hard words—*very* hard words, my masters; but let us hear. We, at least, are waiting for the truth. We pass into court, as the old upright judges say, with eyes and ears dead to the world. A great cause is in hand; dismiss from your minds gentlemen of the jury, all that you may have read in newspapers, heard whispered in libraries; give the defendant fair hearing and true judgment. Good. But the prosecution opens with a volley of charges not in the indictment! Will it seem credible that the prosecutor assumes his case? Will it seem—we do not say decent—but even possible, that, in a few—*very* few—words, he should repeat his accusation of forgery and fraud;

then triumphantly call on Mr. Collier, for his part, to prove his innocence? Is the Manuscript Department in London or in Cork.

The prosecutor rolls away from the one question before the court—the veracity of the Old Corrector—to Dulwich, to Bridgewater House, to the State Paper Office. This course of accusation is not only reckless, but ridiculous. It is the same thing as though Sydney were accused of not only writing the answer to Filmer, but of forging Magna Charta and the Constitutions of Clarendon! It is the same thing as if Montalembert had been charged, not only with publishing the Debate on India, but with robbing a church, or with false dealing in the funds. We see no ground on which these new insinuations can be justified. By and by we shall show that they are false—absolutely and beyond conception false. But were they doubtful, it would be sin against English dealing to bring them forward. We do not suffer even a criminal to be tried on one count, judged on another. In no conceivable court of justice would this drivelling on from charge to charge be suffered. You do not prove a hind guilty of rick-firing by asserting that he has also possibly robbed a barn. Prove one count. You must not dream that you strengthen an unsupported accusation by hinting at your eagerness to bring forward a second unsupported accusation. The reader who finds you rambling off from your own distinct pledge to produce proofs of forgery and fraud in the case of the Old Corrector, will conclude, and rightly conclude, that you wander from your point because you have no confidence in your case.

When we drop down to details, we are even more dissatisfied with the way in which our Manuscript Department has dealt with this Charge against the Old Corrector.

Look at these lithographs. Will any man who ever scrawls with a pencil say that Mr. Netherclift's copies of the dots and words in any way suggest pencil scratches? How can you reproduce pencil marks by ink? Our Manuscript Department has capped Mr. Ruskin's marvellous feat of showing that artists cannot draw a lion by exhibiting to the world a picture of an ill-drawn tiger. Ink lines are sharp in form, black in tint. Pencil lines are vague. Neither do we think Mr. Netherclift's copies faithful to the spirit of the originals. We have seen those originals, when the Folio was shown at the Society of Antiquaries, and more recently, when it was deposited with Sir Frederic Madden, and we reluctantly, but with no fear, pronounce these pretended fac-similes worthless for the one great end for which they have been made—that of assisting readers unacquainted with the Manuscript corrections to any true judgment of the relative characters of the ink writing and the pencil marks.

We now come to the text. Here we find three arguments produced to damn Mr. Collier and his Old Corrector. These three arguments we will state in words to which even our Manuscript Department shall not be able to object. They stand in order of importance thus:—1. That under the ink writing of the Folio there exists pencil writing in a more modern hand. 2. That the corrections are far more numerous than Mr. Collier represents them to be. 3. That no one ever saw the corrections in the Folio until it had been for some years in Mr. Collier's possession, and that it is beyond belief that Mr. Rodd should have sold such a copy of Shakespeare for thirty shillings. Now in each of these three cases the answer is so precise—so crushing—that in pure good will we throw in the additional argument (4.) of the text-word, not here used, but on which an infinite deal of nothing has been said elsewhere.

1. In the first place, it is said that under the ink writing of the Folio certain pencil marks are visible. It is said that with the naked eye sometimes, with a microscope many times, these pencil marks may be clearly seen to underlie the ink writing. If so, there is reason to conclude that the ink writing is at least as modern as the pencil writing. Find, therefore, a date for the pencilling and you may pretty safely fix a date for the writing. The test of spelling is adopted. The test of hand-writing, as every one who knows manuscript is aware, is extremely deceptive. But, spelling is supposed by our Manuscript Department to be evidence. Spelling of the word "body" is taken as a sure test. This word is found in the Folio written in pencil "body"—written in ink "bodie." Now, Bodie says our Manuscript Department, is an old form, Body a new form of the word. *Ergo*, the rascal who wrote "bodie" in ink upon "body" in pencil must have been a very recent rascal—"still alive" is the charitable supposition,—and his adoption of the ancient spelling in his ink is neither more nor less than a fraudulent mystification. To show how much is made of this argument, we must quote the very words of its triumphant discoverer:—

"I now come to the most astounding results of these investigations, in comparison with which all other facts concerning the corrected folio become insignificant. On a close examination of the margins they are found to be covered with an infinite number of faint pencil marks and corrections, in obedience to which the supposed old corrector has made his emendations. These pencil corrections have not even the pretence of antiquity in character or spelling, but are written in a bold hand of the present century. A remarkable instance occurs in 'Richard III.' (fol. 1632, p. 181, col.

2), where the stage direction, 'with the body,' is written in pencil in a clear modern hand, while over this the ink corrector writes in the antique and smaller character, 'with the dead bodie,' the word 'dead' being seemingly inserted to cover over the entire space occupied by the larger pencil writing, and 'bodie' instead of 'body' to give the requisite appearance of antiquity."

Now, we feel some shame in having the task thrust on us of delivering the obvious answer to a statement of this singular sort made by gentlemen holding a good position in a public library. If a youth under examination for a clerkship in the Customs had given such a reason for his want of faith in the Old Corrector, we cannot doubt that he would have been incontinently sent back to his Primer. Indeed, the ignorance of books which such an argument pre-supposes is in our days perfectly astounding.

If the gentlemen who advance this argument had read for its support no more of Shakspearian literature than every man pretending to cultivation in our day reads for his instruction and delight, they would have seen that in this matter of spelling their pleadings pass to the defendant's side. They would have known that Body is the ancient form of this word, that Bodie is a comparatively modern innovation. The youngest reader who has turned over the leaves of his old family Bible is aware that up to Elizabeth's time and beyond it the word is spelt Body. In Tyndale it is Body—in Cranmer it is Body or Bodye—in the Genevan version it is Body—in the Rheims it is Body. It is the same in secular writings. It is Body in Caxton's 'Gouernayle of Helthe'—Body in Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales'—Body in Gower's 'Confessio Amantis'—Body in Spencer's 'Fairie Queen'. In the first edition of Bacon's 'Advancement of Learning' (1605) it is spelt Body—in the first edition of Raleigh's 'History of the World' (1614) it is spelt Body—in the 1616 edition of Ben Johnson's 'Every Man in his Humour' it is spelt Body. In the 'Hamlet' of 1604 the word is spelt Body no less than fifteen times—once by a printer's fault, Bodie. About the time of Shakspeare's death the fashion began to change. Yet, for twenty or thirty years, the mode of spelling was considered indifferent. In the Geneva Bible of 1611 the word is Body in St. Matthew, Body in St. Mark, mainly Body in St. Luke, sometimes Bodie in St. John. In the Book of Common Prayer, we read Body in the editions of 1552, 1604, 1637 and 1662. In the reign of Charles the Second Bodie became a usual form. A corrector, therefore, writing in the time of Charles the First would be pretty sure to have written Body. A corrector in the time of Charles the Second would as certainly have written Bodie. These facts are no discoveries of ours. They are known to boys and girls. Why are they not known at the British Museum?

There is one thing more astounding in this matter than the gross ignorance; that is, the offensive carelessness or haste. The gentlemen who bring this charge against Mr. Collier have not read Shakspeare himself. Why, in the very Shakspeare Folio under their Microscopes the word "Body" occurs more than 200 times. How is it spelt there? Body—mainly, if not uniformly Body!—in letters as plain as pike-staves! What becomes of the preposterous induction that the ink writing must be modern because it simulates ancient spelling upon more modern pencil marks?

2. The second argument adduced to sustain the charge of forgery is, that Mr. Collier has reproduced in his books an incomplete List of the Old Corrector's emendations. We are not quizzing. The Manuscript Department, fancying this a reason on its side, takes a vast deal of pains to establish the circumstance beyond dispute. No less than twenty-two pages of emendations are given from the Folio as example; not half of which, we are assured, are known to Mr. Collier. We accept the proof. We do so without even seeing the Folio. Is not the knowledge of logic on a par with the knowledge of books? Why the assertion proves that the gentlemen of the Museum have made a much closer scrutiny of the Folio with their microscopes than Mr. Collier with his unsuspecting eyes. They know the ticks and dots, the scratches and erasures, far better than he. That is all. Because Mr. Collier has overlooked a great number of marks in the Folio, how in the name of sense does it follow that he must have had a finger in their fabrication? Explain me *that*, Hal!

A candid Reader will see that such a circumstance is a very strong plea in bar of the judgment here pronounced. Would not a forger know what he had forged? Would a commentator, even supposing him capable of the moral guilt of forgery, fabricate beyond his need? Would the coiner risk his neck and forget to pass his gold? Nothing less than the perversity of passion could blind the compilers of this charge to the fact, that in proving the abundance of unappropriated hints in the Old Corrector they are proving Mr. Collier's perfect innocence of any acquaintance with the resources of that personage.

3. The third argument is very gross. It is one that no gentleman need refute. To make it is an offence against good manners; for it amounts in effect to a threat that if Mr. Collier shall be unable to prove that the corrections were in the Folio when he bought it, he will be held guilty of their fabrication. Such a doctrine is perfectly frightful. Yet it most fortunately happens that through accidental circumstances Mr. Collier is able to prove, by the evidence of a witness of the very highest credit, that the Folio while

it was yet in Mr. Rodd's possession was seen to be full of emendations. The turning up of this evidence in the very hour of need is almost romantic. Mr. Collier hears that a gentleman and a scholar of the highest attainments and distinction had seen and described the Folio to his friends. He naturally wrote to ask for such particulars as the gentleman might remember after a lapse of so many years. To his delight he received from the Rev. Dr. Wellesley, the respected principal of New Inn Hall, Oxford, the following most important and decisive testimony :

" Woodmancote Rectory, Hurstperpoint,
" August 13th, 1859.

" Sir,—Although I do not recollect the precise date, I remember some years ago being in the shop of Thomas Rodd on one occasion when a case of books from the country had just been opened. One of these books was *an imperfect folio Shakspeare, with an abundance of manuscript notes in the margins*. He observed to me that it was of little value to Collectors as a copy, *and that the price was thirty shillings*. I should have taken it myself; but, as he stated that he had put it by for another customer, I did not continue to examine it, nor did I think more about it, until I heard afterwards that it had been found to possess *great literary curiosity and value*. In all probability, Mr. Rodd named you to me, but whether he or others did so the affair was generally spoken of at the time, and I never heard it doubted that you had become the possessor of the book. I am, Sir, your faithful and obedient servant.

"H. WELLESLEY."

"To J. P. Collier, Esq."

This evidence, from the hand of the Principal of New Inn Hall, disperses and destroys for ever the gross insinuations against Mr. Collier's personal honour.

4. There remains, as respects the Old Corrector, the mystery of who he was and when he lived. Those who think he is still alive bring forward what they call a Test Word. This test word will be found as weak as the test spelling. The argument proceeds upon the assumption that the word "cheer," introduced by the Old Corrector into the text of 'Coriolanus,' is, in the sense there given to it, a word of modern growth—not older, says Mr. Ingleby, than 1808. To this assertion the reply is brief. The word was certainly in use in the time of Charles the Second in the sense given to it by the Old Corrector. Examples from one book will serve as well as from twenty. In 'The Diary of Henry Teonge, Chaplain on board His Majesty's Ships Assistance, Bristol and Royal Oak, anno 1675, to 1679,' we read at page 14, this passage :—"As

soone as the boate was put off from the ship, wee honour their departure with 3 CHEARES, 7 gunns and our trumpets sounding." The word occurs seven other times in Teonge, and in precisely the sense in which it is used in 'Coriolanus.' So passes into air the last vestige of proof yet adduced against the antiquity and genuineness of the Old Corrector.

Pass we now from the wreck of all these arguments to a short consideration of the insinuations of minor crimes against Mr. Collier, Having failed most signally to prove, on their own selected ground, that the party on trial had been a rogue on one occasion, it would seem to have occurred to the gentlemen of the Manuscript Department that the abominable charge might be made to pass under a general imputation that he had always been a rogue. Three other charges are thereupon insinuated against Mr. Collier.

Let us look at these insinuations one by one. First, there is the case of the Bridgewater House documents. All the world knows that the late Earl of Ellesmere allowed Mr. Collier to inspect the papers of his family; that Mr. Collier published a volume of selections from these for the Camden Society. Among the family papers were several documents of extremely great interest for the history of Shakspeare, and his times. Mr. Collier, who believed them to be ancient and genuine, published them. Some persons doubted, and still doubt, whether these documents are genuine. We ourselves have doubts; though we are far from agreeing with Manuscript Department that they are "modern forgeries." We are now told by the gentlemen, who pronounce on the Folio without having read it, that they are in the same handwriting as the Folio corrections. Lord Ellesmere, the present Earl, is of a very different mind. In a note which Mr. Collier cites, Lord Ellesmere says:—"There is no pretence whatever for saying that the emendations in the Perkins Shakspeare are in the same handwriting as those in my first folio: on the contrary, except as they are (or profess to be) of the same period, they are quite different." Some careful facsimiles of these Bridgewater documents lie before us; and we confess that we agree with the Earl. We see no reason for pronouncing the two hands to be the same. In fact, we should refuse to do any such thing. There is the faint resemblance which exists between all Italian writing of the seventeenth century; certainly not more. The difference between both and Mr. Collier's own hand is organic. Why—against the opinions of Lord Ellesmere—is this case insinuated? Mr. Collier believes in the genuineness of these Bridgewater papers. But supposing he is wrong in this belief—is credulity a crime?

We are now whisked off to Dulwich; where we are told, that a

letter of Mrs. Alleyn's, in which Mr. Collier found the name of Shakspeare, no longer contains that name. The letter is rotten and torn; it is torn and worn in the place where the name of Shakspeare occurred. The disappearance is natural enough; and the Manuscript Department seems to attach no very great importance to the loss. The idea of forgery in such a case is inconceivable. The name was found, but no fact of any sort was added to the life. A forger forges to some end. No coiner ever yet risked his life for the pleasure of making button tops.

We now arrive at the last and most extraordinary charge in this extraordinary volume. It is here distinctly insinuated that some person not named—but plainly pointed to—has committed the enormous offence of forging a State Paper. Here we get on such very dangerous ground that we must quote the indictment in the words of those who have drawn it up. We only need premise that the document in question is the well-known Petition of the Players in 1596. We read:—

“It is preserved in her Majesty's State Paper Office, bears upon it the official stamp of that office, and forms one of a collection of public papers of undoubted genuineness. Yet there can be little question that it belongs to the same set of *forgeries* as those already investigated: that by some means, yet to be traced, it has been surreptitiously introduced among the Records where it is now found; and in the course of official routine has received with the rest the stamp of authenticity. A fac-simile of it is given by Mr. Halliwell, in his folio Shakspeare, 1853, (vol. i. p. 137), who states that it was discovered by Mr. Collier in the State Paper Office; and Mr. Collier prints it in his ‘Annals of the Stage’ (1831), with the following notice:—‘This remarkable Paper has, perhaps, never seen the light from the moment it was presented, until it was very recently discovered. It is seven years anterior to the date of any other authentic record which contains the name of our great dramatist.’ This petition bears no date, and is written on half a sheet of foolscap paper, without water-mark, and which, from the appearance of the edges, I should think had probably once formed the fly-leaf of some folio volume. A supposed date of 1596 has been placed upon it in pencil by one of the gentlemen in the State Paper Office. Its execution is very neat, and with any one not minutely acquainted with the fictitious hand of these Shakspeare forgeries it might readily pass as genuine. But an examination of the handwriting generally, the forms of some of the letters in particular, and the spurious appearance of the ink, led me to the belief not only that the paper was not authentic, but that it had been executed *by the same hand* as the fictitious documents already dis-

cussed. This conviction I made known to the Right Hon. the Master of the Rolls, who was good enough to direct an official inquiry into the authenticity of the document. In accordance with this direction, on the 30th of January, Sir Francis Palgrave, Deputy Keeper of Public Records, T. Duffus Hardy, Esq., Assistant Keeper of Public Records, and Professor Brewer, Reader at the Rolls, met Sir Frederic Madden and myself for the purpose of investigation, and after a minute and careful examination *the following unanimous decision was arrived at as to the fact of its undoubtedly spurious character.*—

‘We, the undersigned, at the desire of the Master of the Rolls, have carefully examined the documents hereunto annexed, purporting to be a petition to the Lords of her Majesty’s Privy Council, from Thomas Pope, Richard Burbadge, John Hemings, Augustine Phillips, William Shakespeare, William Kempe, William Slye, Nicholas Tooley, and others, in answer to a petition from the Inhabitants of the Liberty of the Blackfriars, and we are of opinion that the document in question is spurious.

‘30th January, 1860.

‘FRA PALGRAVE, K. H., Deputy-Keeper of H. M. Public Records.

‘FREDERIC MADDEN, K. H., Keeper of the MSS., British Museum.

‘J. S. BREWER, M. A., Reader at the Rolls.

‘T. DUFFUS HARDY, Assistant-Keeper of Records.

‘N. E. S. A. HAMILTON, Assistant Dep. of MSS., British Museum.’

‘I direct this paper to be appended to the undated document now last in the Bundle, marked 222, Eliz. 1596.

‘2 February, 1860.

‘JOHN ROMILLY, Master of the Rolls.’

—So far, then, as relates to this document, the question must be considered as set at rest; and it is almost unnecessary to point out the weight of the decision, not alone in regard to this *condemned forgery*, but in respect of its bearing upon the other writings here treated of. Before a new edition of Shakspeare is issued, or a new life of Shakspeare written, it will be necessary that the whole of the hitherto supposed *basis* of the Poet’s history should be rigorously examined, and no effort spared to discover the perpetrator of that treason against the Majesty of English Literature, which it has been my object to denounce.”

This passage, every one will say, has at first a most ugly look. Sir John Romilly’s name—Mr. Duffus Hardy, Sir Francis Palgrave—documents solemnly put before a jury of scholars—examined by them, unhesitatingly condemned as spurious by them—all this

seems like dreadful, earnest fact. On looking closer into the affair the darkness begins to pale. Indeed, the result of inquiry will not a little, we should think, surprise and perplex the gentlemen who have throughout the attack on Mr. Collier chosen to argue from particulars to generals—to derive from the similarity of handwriting in several documents, an argument in proof of their fabrication by one hand.

On reading the passage, we are at first struck by the singular fact that a judge, sitting in one of our courts of law, should in the discharge of a secondary duty of his high place, have made himself a party, even in appearance, or by implication, in a personal attack which may possibly lead to a judicial investigation. Such a course is not usual with our judges. Such a course is peculiarly opposed to the spirit of Sir John Romilly's public life. From what we know of Sir John, we feel convinced that, when permitting the scrutiny which has taken place into the genuineness of this Player's Petition, he was not sufficiently aware of the fact that his permission and his signature would be instantly used for the purpose of publicly hinting away the good name of an honourable man.

We are next arrested by the singular circumstance that the gentlemen who pronounce on the spuriousness of this document are not its proper custodians. Why is the paper taken from the State Paper Office to the Record Office? Why are the experienced keepers of the State Papers not made parties to the certificate? Do they refuse to sign? It is clear beyond cavil that they must be the best judges of such things. From their youth they have been familiar with the handwriting of the seventeenth century. They know the marks and stamps of their office. They are, therefore, abler to pronounce on the genuineness of a particular State Paper of the Elizabethan era, than any outside person, however eminent. Mr. Duffus Hardy and Sir Francis Palgrave are undoubtedly most able critics of the Gothic handwriting of the tenth and twelfth centuries. We are not aware of their accomplishments in that respect for later times. Mr. Brewer is a most able man, but he is an amateur, so to speak. Sir Frederic Madden is out of court. The want of decency which allowed Mr. Hamilton to set his name to such a certificate is simply deplorable. It is not the custom in our time for a man acting as public prosecutor, to thrust himself first into the jury-box, and then on to the bench. The opinions of Mr. Lechmere or of Mr. Lemon on the probable date and genuine character of the Player's Petition, would have had far more weight with Shakspearian scholars than the certificate signed by these five. We are ourselves perfectly familiar with that Petition—and with thousands of similar documents of its assumed date—yet we confess ourselves

utterly unable to perceive the grounds from which its spuriousness has been inferred by the five gentlemen whose names we have given. So far as we know, this opinion of ours is shared by every capable and independent Shakspearian scholar. Mr. Dyce believes the petition genuine. Mr. Charles Knight believes it genuine. Mr. Halliwell believes it genuine. Mr. Singer and Mr. Lloyd believe it genuine. We have no reason to suppose that any of the experienced officers of the State Paper Office consider it other than genuine.

This point, however, may be safely reserved for future controversy. It will come up again; for the Player's Petition is one of the very few Shaksperian documents which remain to us. Its light will not be readily given up. What we have now to deal with is the more personal question—the big black imputation on the honesty of a particular scholar. Mr. Collier is said to have discovered this Petition; it is hinted, as the Reader will have seen, in no vague terms, that he may have fabricated it for purposes of literary fraud. Now, will it be thought credible, that the gentlemen of a public institution—gentlemen accustomed to the charge of manuscripts—gentlemen engaged in hunting a particular document, branded by themselves as spurious, to Mr. Collier's door, should never once have thought of making the preliminary inquiry—whether that Player's Petition was, or was not, known to be in Her Majesty's State Paper Office before Mr. Collier's researches first began? Such a question would seem to lie at the threshold of their inquiry. It is certain that, had they made the inquiry, they would have been saved from an awful mistake. The easy and ready answer to that question sweeps the ground on which they have chosen to stand in their whole case clean away from beneath their feet. Merely for our reader's guidance, we have thought good to enter into the correspondence which we now produce:—

(Copy.)

“Athenæum Office, Feb. 13, 1860.

“The Editor of the *Athenæum* presents his compliments to Mr. Lemon, and, referring to the Petition of the Players—contained in the bundle of papers in the State Paper Office marked ‘Bundle No. 222, Elizabeth, 1596,’ a copy of which has been printed in text by Mr. Collier and in fac-simile by Mr. Halliwell,—takes the liberty of inquiring whether, within Mr. Lemon's knowledge, that Petition of the Players was in the State Paper Office before Mr. Collier began his researches in that Office? An early answer will oblige.

Mr. Lemon most obligingly answered this note by return of post:—

“State Paper Office, Feb. 14, 1860.

“Dear Sir,—In reply to your question, I beg to state that the

Petition of the Players of the Blackfriars Theatre, alluded to in your note, was well known to my father and myself, before Mr. Payne Collier began his researches in this Office. I am pretty confident that my father himself brought it under the notice of Mr. Collier, in whose researches he took great interest.—I am very faithfully yours,

R. LEMON.

"The Editor of the Athenæum."

Where now is the Manuscript Department's house of cards? What becomes of all the inferential evidence—all the dogmatic assertion—in favour of forgery established by the fact of a common handwriting? Here is proof—official, incontrovertible proof—that one of the documents forged, as the Manuscript Department has it, by the same hand, could not by any earthly possibility have been fabricated by Mr. Collier. *Ergo*, none of the papers in the same hand could have been the work of Mr. Collier. Neither the Old Corrector's Emendations nor the Bridgewater House Letters, can on this hypothesis, be any longer susceptible of a reference to him. The assailants of the Old Corrector have unintentionally proved too much. They have chosen to stand on the argument of accumulation. By the argument of accumulation they now fall.

THE IMPUTED SHAKSPEARE FORGERIES.

Mr. J. Payne Collier's Reply.

Maidenhead, Feb. 14.

AFTER a delay of more than seven months, Mr. N. E. S. A. Hamilton, as the mouthpiece of the Manuscript Authorities of the British Museum, has published his pamphlet against me. I began to be almost afraid that it would not appear at all, or at least during my life, while I could vindicate my own conduct and character; for, at the age to which I have arrived, no man can calculate upon having much time to spare. I am thankful for my continued health, and for the non-impairment of any of my faculties, if only because I am thus able to meet, and, in most important particulars to confute, the various calumnies with which I have been assailed.

The manner in which I have pursued, especially since I committed the great offence of discovering the Corrected Folio of Shakespeare's Works, 1632, only shows how small a reputation in an inferior department of literature is sufficient to secure the bitterest hostility. That hostility reached its climax when a noble

and learned Lord did me the honor to address to me a small lucubration on the legal acquirements of our great dramatist. Lord Campbell's letter to me appeared in the beginning of 1859, and in May of that year, Sir Frederic Madden procured the loan of the Perkins Folio (so I shall hereafter call it for the sake of brevity) from His Grace the present Duke of Devonshire.

Having obtained it, Mr. N. E. S. A. Hamilton, one of Sir F. Madden's junior assistants, "seized the opportunity" (his own words) of subjecting the volume to the strictest examination. In this undertaking he was avowedly aided by Sir F. Madden and by Mr. Maskelyne, of the Mineral Department, who brought for their use a microscope bearing the imposing and scientific name of the Simonides Uranius. They must give me leave to say that they applied to the book even a more powerful moral magnifier, which too many literary antagonists have at their command.

The result of this and other scrutinies (from which it should seem I was purposely excluded) has been the tract now before me, which, by reprints and by various other expedients,* has been swelled to the bulk of 155 pages, and which I take the present mode of answering, in some haste, in order to counteract pre-judgment by those who are not acquainted with many of the real facts of the case. Excepting, however, in its unimportant Appendixes, Mr. Hamilton's 'Inquiry' contains little beyond what he inserted in his letters printed in the *Times* as long since as July last.

Those Letters could not fail to attract much public attention, and as it was urged, among other things, that my account of the purchase of the Perkins Folio was "highly unsatisfactory," it seems to have met the eye of the Principal of New Inn Hall, Oxford, who, by his own testimony, was fortunately able, in all essential particulars, to confirm my statement. I bought the book of Rodd, the bookseller, in 1849, for 30s., not being then aware, nor till long afterwards, that it contained a single MS. note. The implied, almost the expressed, imputation was, that in 1849 it was actually without notes, but that I, being skilled in the imitation of old writing, had subsequently inserted them, and had passed them off as ancient emendations of the text of Shakespeare. It so happened, that just after I had left Rodd's, and had secured my purchase by paying for it, leaving the volume to be sent home, the Rev. Dr. H. Wellesley entered the shop, looked at the book, and

* One of these expedients has been the occupation of no fewer than twenty-two pages with the Old Corrector's emendations of 'Hamlet,' all that were really important having been pointed out eight years ago. What bearing this useless repetition can have upon the question of authenticity, it would puzzle abler men than Mr. Hamilton to explain. His real object was only to prove my omissions: but I purposely excluded many merely literal errors and changes, which Mr. Hamilton thinks worthy of record. This is a testimony in favour of the Old Corrector which I little expected.

seeing the MS. notes, which I had not seen, wished to become the possessor. Rodd informed Dr. Wellesley that the old folio had been already sold for the very price I had given for it; and it was mentioned to me in August last, that Dr. Wellesley had openly stated this circumstance, I therefore took the liberty, though a perfect stranger, of writing to Dr. Wellesley for such particulars as he could recollect after the lapse of about ten years. He kindly lost no time in replying to my note, dating from his rectory at Woodmancote, Sussex; and if my account of the mode in which I obtained the Perkins Folio, have been "highly unsatisfactory" to my enemies, it may be reasonably doubted whether Dr. Wellesley's substantial confirmation of that account will be more acceptable. It is as follows:—

"Woodmancote Rectory, Hurstperpoint,
"August 13th, 1859.

"SIR,—Although I do not recollect the precise date, I remember some years ago being in the shop of Thomas Rodd on one occasion when a case of books from the country had just been opened. One of those books was *an imperfect folio Shakespeare, with an abundance of manuscript notes in the margins*. He observed to me that it was of little value to Collectors as a copy, *and that the price was thirty shillings*. I should have taken it myself; but, as he stated that he had put it by for another customer, I did not continue to examine it, nor did I think any more about it, until I heard afterwards that it had been found to possess *great literary curiosity and value*. In all probability, Mr. Rodd named you to me, but whether he or others did so, the affair was generally spoken of at the time, and I never heard it doubted that you had become the possessor of the book. I am, Sir, your faithful and obedient servant,

H. WELLESLEY."

"To J. P. Collier, Esq."

I apprehend that the above note will at once put an end to the discreditable insinuations (if they amount to no more) that I am the real author of the MS. notes in the Perkins Folio. They were all in the margins of the volume when it came into my hands in 1849, although, from causes I explained, I was not aware of their existence till some time afterwards. When I wrote the Preface to the second edition of my 'Notes and Emendations,' octavo, 1853, I felt satisfied that I should be able to carry back the history of the book nearly half a century earlier by the evidence of a gentleman of the name of Parry, who, on seeing the fac-simile which had fronted the title-page of the first edition of 1852, had instantly declared that he recognized the handwriting of the MS. notes, and that the very book containing them had been in his possession very

many years before. It is needless here to repeat the particular contents of my Preface, which I showed to Mr. Parry before it was printed off, and which he entirely approved. Owing to the late date at which I had heard of his recognition of the volume by its notes, and to a slight accident which had befallen him, I was not able to exhibit to him the Folio itself until after the Preface had been worked off; but I distinctly state, in the most positive manner, that very soon after it was so worked off I took the Perkins Folio with me to St. John's Wood, where Mr. Parry resided, and showed it to him, both inside and outside. I met him coming from the house, and, owing to his temporary lameness, he was walking with a stick (not with *sticks*, as Mr. Parry states, and least of all with *crutches*, as Mr. Hamilton wishes to make out), which stick I held for him, while he looked at the volume I had brought: he turned over the leaves in several places, and I am very sure looked also at the cover, and returned the Folio to me, while I handed him back his stick. Upon these points I cannot be mistaken, though Mr. Parry seems to have forgotten them (he is a man of about my own age, and I heartily wish that his memory were as good as mine), and within a very few days after I had seen him I made the following memorandum, which I now extract from the margin of my own copy of 'Notes and Emendations,' 8vo. 1853:—

"I afterwards showed him [Mr. Parry] the book itself, and having looked at it in several places, he said, *This was my book: it is the same, but it has been much misused since it was in my possession.*"

This note was inserted about seven years ago, and I cannot be more sure of anything than of the correctness of the information it contains. I impute no blame to Mr. Parry: I have no personal acquaintance with him beyond what I have stated, but I believe him to be a man of honour and probity, and he is known to persons for whom I have the highest respect and esteem. When he went to the British Museum and saw Sir F. Madden, Mr. Hamilton, Mr. Maskelyne and others, he may have become confused, and they may have passed and re-passed the different folios of Shakespeare before his eyes until he did not remember which edition had been his own: to me he always said that his annotated folio was of the date of 1632. Several living members of my family (to say nothing of the dead) can prove that, when I returned from St. John's Wood, I said that I had seen Mr. Parry, and that he had recognized the Perkins Folio as an old friend.

However, independently of Mr. Parry's evidence, which would have traced the MS. emendations to the very commencement of the present century, Dr. Wellesley's note establishes beyond dis-

pute that they were in the volume when I purchased it of Rodd, in 1849.

A great deal has been said about pencil marks, and here again my enemies have been so charitable as to assign them to me. Mr. Hamilton, in his 'Inquiry,' has given a fac-simile of some that best answered his purpose, and in a manner that best answered his purpose. I never saw them, and they were never seen by anybody (not even by the lithographer who made for me no fewer than *nineteen fac-similes* from every part of the book) until the Perkins Folio had found its way to the British Museum. There, and there only, they originated, I mean of course the discovery of them; and Mr. Hamilton and his friends have displayed wonderful ingenuity in construing, what they often admit to be mere specks and points of blumbago, into continuous lines and even into complete words. It is enough for me to assert, most unequivocally, that I never introduced one of them; and it is singular that the late Duke of Devonshire, whom I have seen day after day looking over the emendations, and calling in the assistance of my eyes and spectacles, never once observed that they existed.

But the Manuscript Authorities of the British Museum have proceeded with their eyes open; they, indeed, in some respects, have had eyes where other folks are blind, but they have not attended to the warning given by those who were not so bent on making out fraud or imposition that they were only discovering a mare's nest. The truth seems to be, that latterly they have begun to feel that they have little chance of proving their accusation. Hence much of the delay that has occurred in the publication of their pamphlet, to which such a dignified shape has been given: they have been hunting in every direction, and searching in every hole and corner for something to support and bolster up their falling accusation. They have gone back, not only ten, but twenty, thirty, and almost forty years, to find scraps of information that might lead to the supposition that I was not always as scrupulous as could be wished in my literary dealings. There is not an atom of foundation for any such imputation. I have always been a hard-working man, and I have sometimes been employed upon what, if I could, I would have avoided. For many years I seldom went to bed until other people were rising, and how much I have worked gratuitously for friends and Societies I need not say. Do people think, then, that I have had time, not only to acquire one form of old writing, but many, to manufacture inks and secretly to practise all the arts of imposition? I never tried it in my life, but I am confident it is no such easy thing to imitate even one kind of old writing, much less to imitate many. I have had too much to do

with my own plain round English hand (from which I never, even for a playful purpose, attempted to vary) to be able to devote my time to the manufacture of public or private documents, and, as in the case of the Perkins Folio, to fill a volume of about a thousand pages, with innumerable notes, to say nothing of changes of punctuation in tens of thousands of places.

Neither have I ever enjoyed facilities absolutely necessary to such elaborate trickery. In five out of the eight houses I have occupied, since I married forty-five years ago, I never had a study to myself: my wife, children and servants were too numerous to allow of it. The common eating-room was therefore my common writing-room; and when I have had a study, I defy the world to show an instance in which I ever turned the key of the door to prevent intrusion: everybody was admitted at all hours. I had no secrets: my wife opened and read every letter I received; and in my study was always kept a chest of drawers to which the family had constant access for some of the most ordinary requirements of a household. Therefore, upon nobody could this charge of forgery against me have come with more astonishment than upon my children; and if my wife had lived, I think it would have killed her to have known that such a base accusation was kept hanging over her husband's head for about eight months, when she was well aware that it could be refuted in an hour.

Upon this point I will trust myself to say no more; but I will just notice briefly the supplemental and subsidiary charges made against me, in order to give some slight plausibility to the accusation that I am myself the author of the pen and pencil emendations in the Perkins Folio.

First and foremost come what Mr. Hamilton without scruple ventures to call "the Bridgewater Shakespeare Forgeries."[†] Surely this is begging the whole question: they may be forgeries, but I do not believe that they are so. I never made them; but I found them in 1835 among Lord Ellesmere's manuscripts. I was, it is true, alone when they came to my hands; but his Lordship had been in the room only a few minutes before; and the moment I had ascertained what they were, I carried them to him in the Upper Library, and at his instance read them to him. His Lordship desired me to copy them; I did so, and carried the originals and

[†] I discovered twenty years ago some MS. emendations in a copy of Shakespeare, folio, 1623, in his Lordship's library, and these are now brought against me, and charged as in the same handwriting as the notes in the Perkins Folio. I deny it on my own authority, and on the authority of the present Earl of Ellesmere, who recently wrote a note to a gentleman of my acquaintance containing these words:—"There is no pretence whatever for saying that the emendations in the Perkins Shakespeare are in the same handwriting as those in my first folio: on the contrary, except as they are (or profess to be) of the same period, they are quite different." His Lordship kindly added, that I might make use, if I pleased, of the result of his observations.

the copies to him. I left them with him ; and on the next day, or on the day after, I overtook him going into Bridgewater House : he told me that he had just seen Mr. Murray, who had said that, if I would put the documents into shape, and write an Introduction to them, he would give me 50*l.* or 100*l.* (I think the former was the sum) for my pains. I declined the offer at once, saying that I could not consent to make money by what was his Lordship's property. Lord Ellesmere, with his usual generosity, replied that the documents were as much my property as his, for I had found them, and, but for me, they might not have been discovered till Doomsday. Still I declined, but said that I should be happy to print them for myself, and as presents to my friends, if I were permitted. "Do as you like with them," said his Lordship ; and, in a manner, forced them into my hands, adding, "consider them and treat them as your own."

I hastened with them to Rodd's and he and I examined them carefully : it was at first agreed that they should be printed, and that Rodd should sell as many as would pay the cost ; but I afterwards altered my views, and only a very few copies got out in the usual manner.

Here I may be allowed to state, as it is in some sort necessary for my own vindication, that, until I prepared my first edition of Shakespeare, in 1843, I never made a single farthing by anything I wrote regarding our great dramatist. Everything was printed at my own expense, for presents, or at the expense of Societies, to which I belonged, for the use of the members. Thus I was entirely out of pocket for my three tracts—'New Facts,' 'New Particulars,' and 'Farther Particulars,'—and, in the whole, I spent more than 100*l.* in the illustration of Shakespeare's Life and Plays. A weekly critic has done me only justice when, some time ago, he remember that, but for the firm resistance of the Council, I should have presented the first edition of my 'Notes and Emendations' to the Shakespeare Society. The late Earl of Ellesmere and the late Duke of Devonshire both knew that I was not of a mercenary or fraudulent turn ; I laid out large sums for each of them ; and they never expected from me receipt or memorandum."

My 'New Facts' consisted mainly of what Mr. Hamilton designates as "the Bridgewater House Shakespeare Forgeries." He adduces little or no evidence to prove them so ; he is satisfied with his own *gratis dictum* ; but I doubt whether other people will be quite as easily contented. I had the documents in my possession for many years unasked for ; but one day Lord Ellesmere either wrote to me, or told me, that he had heard their authenticity questioned, and he spoke of Mr. J. Wilson Croker as an unbeliever.

His Lordship, therefore, requested me to send them to his house; I did so, and expressed my satisfaction that he had resumed the possession of his own papers. When I saw his Lordship next, a few weeks had elapsed, and he informed me that in the interval the documents had been "tested;" but he did not say by whom, nor in what way; merely adding that he was quite satisfied. Mr. Croker, at a subsequent period, told me that he had been convinced by the inspection, and Mr. Hallam, whom I met one day at dinner while I was one of the Vice-Presidents of the Society of Antiquaries, gave me the same assurance. A year or two subsequently the Earl of Ellesmere did not think me unworthy of the appointment of Secretary to the Commission on the British Museum.

I cannot state exactly at what date it occurred; but another paper subsequently turned up at Bridgewater House, which Lord Ellesmere insisted that I should retain, as a sort of justification of my own opinions. It was partly in the Italian handwriting of some scribe of the day, and partly in that of Sir George Buck, Master of the Revels to James the First, and signed with his name; stating that the Players of the Blackfriars required too much by 1,500*l.* for their property in the Theatre there, which the Crown or the City of London wished to purchase in order to abate the real or supposed nuisance.

Of all these documents what has usually been called "the H. S. Letter" has attracted most attention. H. S. has generally been taken as the initials of the Earl of Southampton, and most probably they were so. I need not describe a paper which has since been printed in every *Life of Shakespeare*; and I only particularize it that I may mention that a fac-simile of it was made not very long after the formation of the Shakespeare Society, by Mr. Netherclift, sen., the most able as well as the most experienced artist in that department that I ever knew. He assured me at the time that, in his judgment, the original was a genuine document, and within the last few weeks, at my instance, he has, upon again inspecting all the documents, renewed this expression of his conviction. Subsequently, that is to say, about the year 1848 or 1849, the other "*Bridgewater Shakespeare Forgeries*," as Mr. Hamilton pleases to term them, also went through the hands of Mr. Netherclift, for the same purpose; and, in order that nothing might be omitted, he added, at my instance, a separate sheet of the water-marks of the paper on which each had been written.

Surely, if I had been conscious that all were forgeries, it is not likely that I should have placed them, without the slightest scruple or control, in such skilful and knowing hands.

Another point may also here properly be noticed. I sent copies

of all fac-similes to the Rev. A. Dyce, and to Mr. Halliwell, but only of "the H. S. Letter" in the first instance. The Rev. A. Deyce in return sent me a note containing these words :—"The fac-simile has certainly *removed from my mind all doubts about the genuineness of the Letter.*" He, therefore, did not consider it a "Bridgewater House Shakespeare Forgery."

Mr. Halliwell, too, in his 'Life of Shakespeare,' 8vo. 1848, having introduced a fac-simile of part of "the H. S. Letter," asserts that an inspection of it "will suffice to convince any one acquainted with such matters that *it is a genuine manuscript of the period.*" he adds a reason why, in his opinion, it was almost impossible that it should be a forgery; and, in a note, he subjoins that No. 201 Art. 3, in the Library of the Society of Antiquaries, is a copy of a commission of about the same period, not only marked, like "the H. S. Letter," with the words *copia vera*, at the conclusion, but the whole absolutely written by the same hand. Yet this is one of the documents now "denounced" as spurious.

I must say a few words, and they shall be as few as possible, regarding the MSS. at Dulwich College. Here I am charged not so much with forgery as fraud, though forgery is also coupled in the accusation. A much-decayed letter has been preserved in the Library from Mrs. Alleyn to her husband, dated Oct. 3, 1603, and in one part of it, according to my reading, she mentions having seen "Mr. Shakespeare of the Globe." It is admitted on all hands, that the letter is very rotten, and that portions of it are deficient in this place; but the gist of the imputation is, that Shakespeare was never spoken of in it, but that I, taking advantage of the defects in the old paper, purposely misrepresented the matter. It is added that for the accomplishment of this fraud, I misread and misrepresented the contents of the letter. Now, inasmuch as the old decayed paper is here indisputably defective, Mr. Hamilton could not possibly know whether Shakespeare's name had or had not been visible when I saw the letter thirty years ago. I may or may not have mis-read some utterly unimportant words, nor does it signify at all, as regards his biography, whether Shakespeare was or was not in Southwark on the 3rd of October, 1603; but I assert most distinctly, that the name was contained in this part of Mrs. Alleyn's Letter, and a dear and dead friend of mine could bear witness to the fact were he fortunately now alive. Not only did we endeavour to make out the perishing and perished words together, but we actually put the old epistle in a piece of paper for better security, and wrote upon the outside of it, that what was within was especially worthy of preservation.* If that envelope have

* My confident belief is, that we showed the letter and Shakespeare's name to the Master or to the Librarian of the College of that day.

since disappeared (I have not seen it from that day to this) it may have been thoughtlessly cast aside, or purposely removed. Perhaps it is still in the box with the other papers that came under my observation. Let it not be forgotten that if my object had been to commit the imputed fraud, nothing could have been more easy than for me to have rubbed away a little more of the crumbling paper, and who then could have detected the trick? Instead of doing so, I did my best to ensure that the rotten paper should hold together as long as possible.

Mr. Hamilton also falls foul of other biographical materials which I met with, and which unquestionably exist in the same charitable Institution. One of them is a Player's Challenge, collated by Mr. Halliwell, and printed by him in 1848, as a genuine relic of the same kind as several others that have come down to our time. Another is a sort of assessment to the poor of Southwark, dated the 6th of April, 1609, in which Shakespeare appears as a contributor; and surely it is enough for me to say of this document, that it was seen by Malone when I was only seven years old, as he has himself recorded in his 'Enquiry,' 8vo. 1796, p. 215. At all events I suppose that even Mr. Hamilton will not go quite the length of contending that I was a forger at that early age, when I was only a probationer in "pot-hooks and hangers."

The last of the assailed documents I shall have reason on the present occasion, to notice is one which I did not find, but *which was found for me*, nearly thirty-five years ago, by the father of a very able and learned public servant, now high in the office in which the discovery was made. I was then collecting materials for my 'History of English Dramatic Poetry and the Stage;' and for this purpose I had obtained an introduction to Mr. Lemon, then, I apprehend, the principal acting person in the State Paper Office, in George Street, Westminster. He was good enough to institute searches for me among the archives in his charge; and calling there one morning (my memory is perfect on the subject, notwithstanding the lapse of more than a generation), he produced five or six papers, all contributing to my object. I lamented to him that I should not have time to copy them all before the office closed, and Mr. Lemon kindly undertook to get one of them transcribed for me. It was a Petition from the Players at the Blackfriars Theatre, in answer to a remonstrance from the inhabitants of the precinct, mainly against the nuisance of the crowds attracted by the performances, and against the repair of the house. I myself copied part of the representation to which this document was a reply; and when Mr. Lemon returned into the room with the transcript of the Petition, he and I compared the two: he took away the

original—which I never saw again—and I the copy of it, which I inserted in my ‘History,’ sending to the printer the very sheet which Mr. Lemon had given to me. I should have had it in my possession to this day had I not, when I removed into the country, got rid of all my “waste,”—consisting, among other things, of every proof and piece of “copy” of the works in which, up to 1850, I had been concerned.

Such is the history of this Petition of the Players at the Blackfriars, as far as I am acquainted with it. I understood that while the public archives were in a course of removal from Great George Street to the new State Paper Office it was mislaid, and was not recovered until some ten or twelve years ago. If, therefore, it be a forgery, it was executed before my time, for until that period I did not even know where the State Paper Office was. Mr. Hamilton is more than half inclined to treat as an imposition another highly curious document, printed for the first time in my last edition of ‘Shakespeare’ (8vo. 1858, Vol. III. p. 214); but really he ought to inform himself better regarding our public muniments before he scatters his imputations.

I humbly hope that all but my enemies will be of opinion that I have cleared myself reasonably well from all suspicion of guilt, and especially from any discreditable connexion with the emendations in the Perkins Folio. The Rev. Dr. Wellesley knows that they were in it when I bought the book. I could have no motive for assigning them to anybody else, if I were really the author of so many invaluable changes; they would do the utmost credit to any editor, and would have made his fortune as well as his fame. Why, then, should I foist them into an old folio when they would have most importantly benefitted myself and my family? The charge is ridiculous. All editors of Shakespeare since 1852 have been, more or less, indebted to them: several have adopted them, most grudgingly to be sure, but they have been compelled to admit them. The Rev. Mr. Dyce, the latest editor (myself excepted), in spite of his frequent, merely dogged, adherence to the exploded text, without a single reason offered, has allowed, under his own hand, that not a few of the emendations are “*so admirable that they can hardly be conjectured.*” He must pardon me for once more employing his very words, for they so forcibly express my own convictions, and indeed almost go beyond them, that I cannot refuse myself the satisfaction of quoting them whenever an occasion fairly presents itself.

Of Mr. N. E. S. A. Hamilton I knew nothing until I saw his accusatory epistle in the *Times* of the 2nd of July last; but according to the specimen before me, he does not seem very well qualified

for the office of a literary detective : he speaks on behalf of himself and "his colleagues," but I cannot believe that all of them feel anything like full reliance on his championship. For myself (*mea culpa*, perhaps,) I never even heard of him ; and the first moment I was informed that he was attacking me, I expressed my astonishment that the Manuscript Department of the British Museum had entrusted such a cause to such obscure hands ; and, I own, that I not very judiciously added the corrosive couplet of the satirist,—

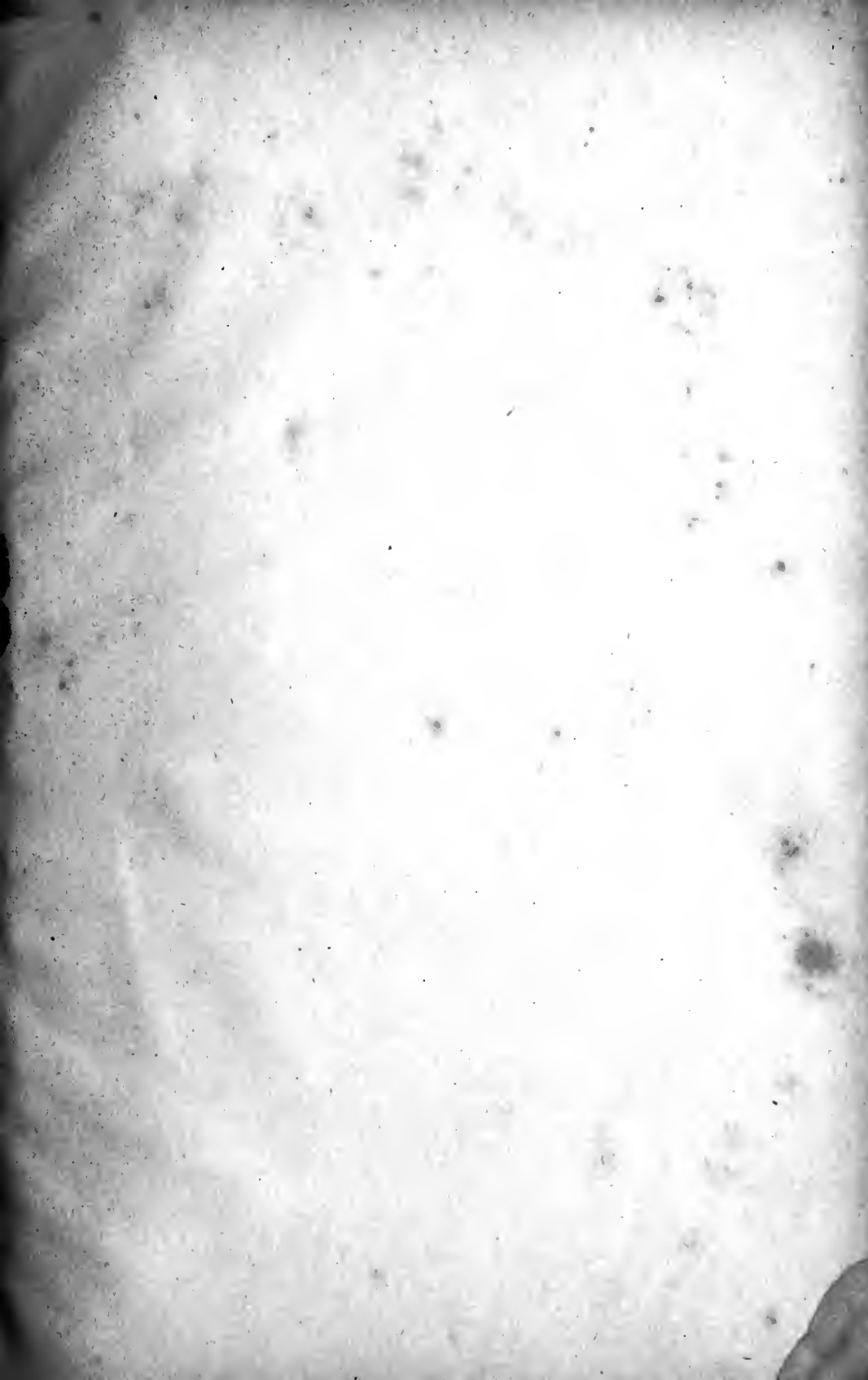
Some creatures are so little and so light,
We hardly know they live, until they bite.

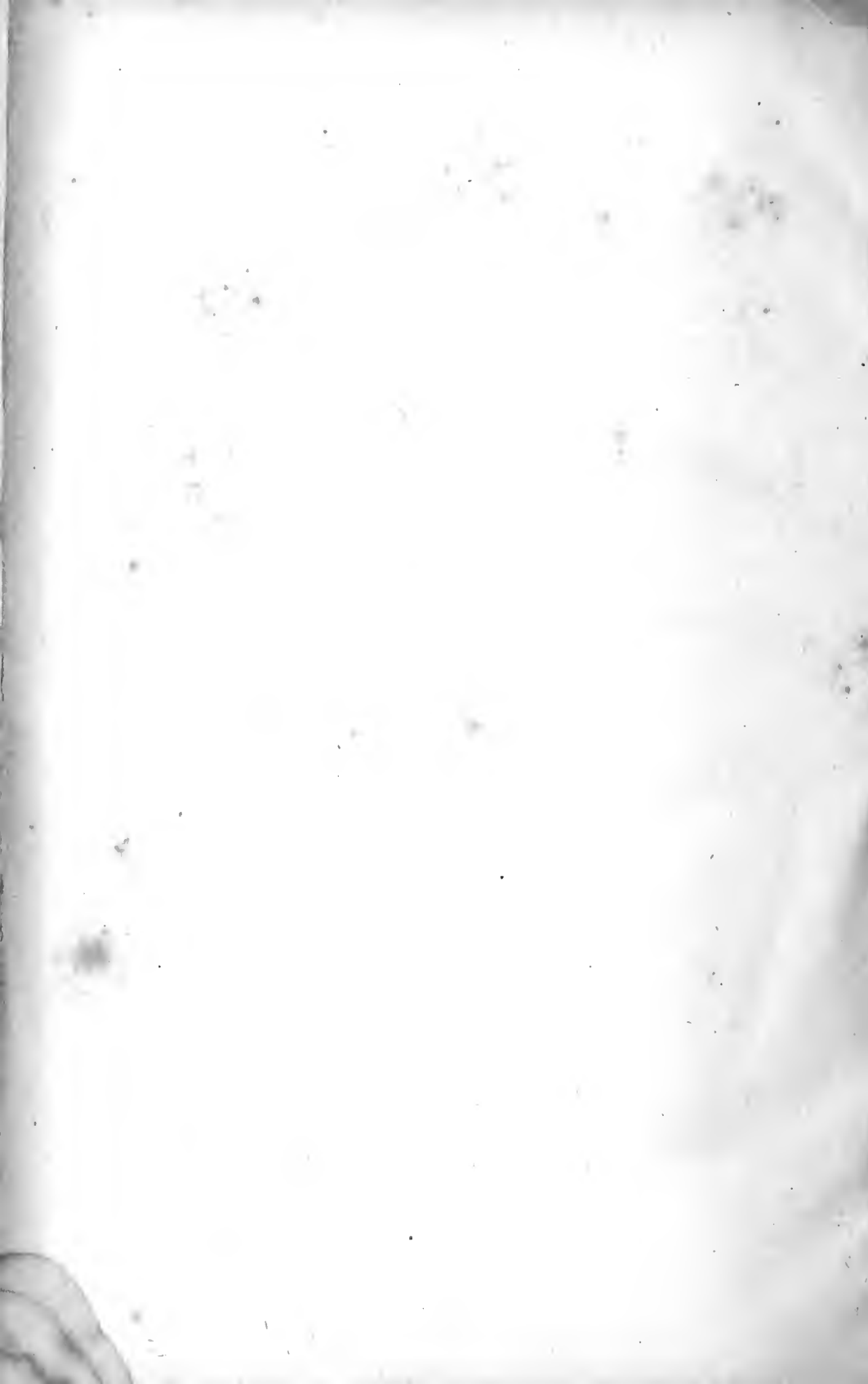
—I did not wonder, therefore, that he should eagerly have "seized" the opportunity" of obtaining notoriety, rather than distinction, by aiming, without the slightest notice, a deadly blow at the character of a literary labourer, who has spent more than fifty years especially in the study of his native language and of his native writers.

From Sir Frederic Madden, however, with whom I have been acquainted for more than thirty years, with whom I have often corresponded, and with whom I have exchanged books, I looked for rather different treatment. It is true that in a note to me, on a different subject, in November last, he mentioned, only incidentally, his wish to see the Perkins Folio. I answered the other points of his communication ; but this I postponed, merely because the present Duke of Devonshire was then in Lancashire, and because I hoped that when he returned to London, he would intrust the Perkinst Folio to my hands (which had gratefully presented it to his noble, condescending, and most generous predecessor), and that I should thus be able myself to convey it to the British Museum and show it to Sir F. Madden ‡. In the mean time his Grace, the present Duke, had confided to my care the preparation of the facsimile of the 'Hamlet' of 1614, and Sir F. Madden's slight expression of a desire to inspect the Perkins Folio escaped my memory. I never dreamed that Sir F. Madden would consider this trifling neglect as a personal offence, especially after he had got over the fact, which I was told he had once taken seriously, that I had not, in the outset, solicited his opinion as to the real date of the emendations. On their positive and intrinsic value, the authorities of the British Museum (and I am not surprised at it) do not, according to Mr. Hamilton, pretend to an opinion. On this point, therefore, I may confidently refer them to the Rev. A. Dyce.

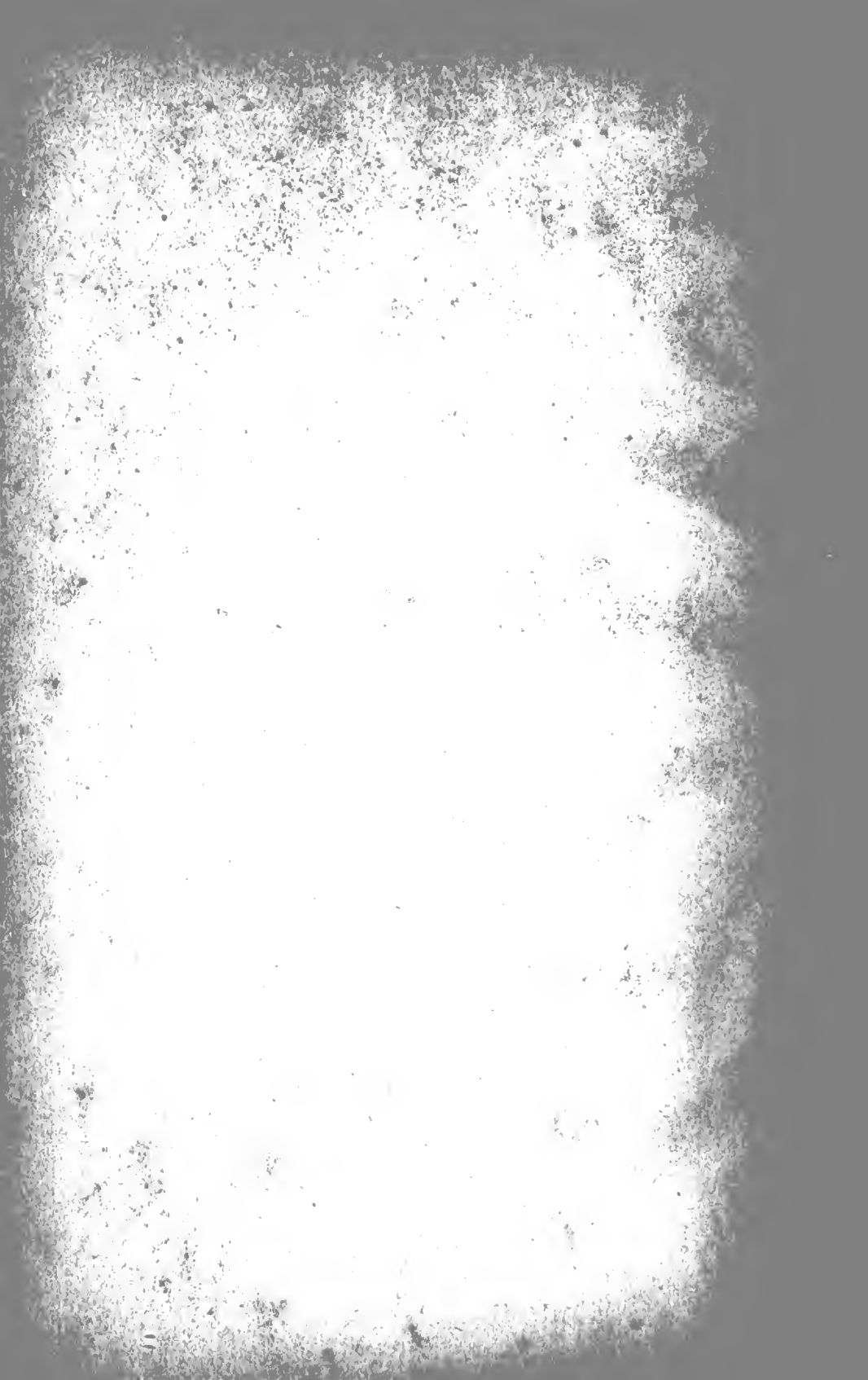
J. PAYNE COLLIER.

‡ Had I been permitted to do so, or had I been asked by Sir F. Madden, when first he obtained the volume from the Duke of Devonshire, to look at it at the British Museum, in order that I might see if it were precisely in the same state as when I gave it to the late Duke, a great deal of trouble, especially about the pencil marks, might have been saved. But then Mr. Hamilton would have been deprived of the opportunity which he "seized," of making a book and bringing himself into temporary notice.









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